



PRESS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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Georgia Resident Pleads Guilty to Laundering Proceeds from a Stolen Identity Tax Refund Fraud Scheme

An Austell, Georgia, resident pleaded guilty today to one count of money laundering, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciruolo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney John A. Horn of the Northern District of Georgia.

According to court documents, Rapheal Atebefia, his co-defendants and others obtained the means of identification of actual individuals, including their names and social security numbers and used this information to access the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) "Get Transcript" database. Get Transcript is an IRS web application program that enabled individuals to access their tax filing information. The stolen names and the information obtained from Get Transcript were used to file false income tax returns.

Atebefia and his co-conspirators obtained prepaid debit cards from stores located in multiple states and registered the cards in the names of the stolen identities. These debit cards were used to receive the income tax refunds requested on the false tax returns. To conceal this fraudulent scheme, the prepaid debit cards were then used to purchase money orders. Atebefia deposited the money orders into his bank accounts and then structured cash withdrawals of the proceeds in order to prevent the bank from filing Currency Transaction Reports.

Atebefia faces a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. A sentencing date has not been set. He also faces monetary penalties, restitution and forfeiture.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciruolo and U.S. Attorney Horn commended special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Postal Service, who investigated the case and Trial Attorneys Michael C. Boteler and Charles M. Edgar Jr. of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Pearce of the Northern District of Georgia, who are prosecuting this case.

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